

Gaston County. The southern part contains Kings Mountain, roughly half of which is in Gaston County and half in Cleveland County. Roads cross the Kings Mountain part of the site at Sherrars Gap, Stepps Gap, and Dixon Gap.

The Crowders Mountain/Kings Mountain complex is characterized by steep slopes and sharp, rocky ridges that are the result of its highly erosion-resistant quartzite rock. The range is oriented from northeast to southwest and extends about eight miles in length. Its elevation varies from 800 feet at the South Carolina state line to over 1690 feet on the summit of The Pinnacle. Crowders Mountain in Gaston County is perhaps the most prominent, steep-sided monadnock in the range, with sheer cliffs over 100 feet tall. Other prominent peaks include The Pinnacle and other sections of Kings Mountain that lie between Sherrars Gap, Stepps Gap, and Dixon Gap. Natural community types range from the harsh, exposed rocky summit areas to sheltered, moist seeps along streams on lower slope areas.

Well-developed examples of the rare Low Elevation Rocky Summit community type occur on exposed, rugged summit areas of Crowders Mountain and Kings Pinnacle, as well as on Kings Mountain near Dixon Gap. These communities contain exposed, craggy outcrops with cliffs and large boulders. Areas of bare rock or lichen-covered rock are extensive. Stunted trees and shrubs are rooted in crevices and around the outcrop margins. Trees typically include Virginia pine (*Pinus virginiana*), oaks, persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), and others of very harsh, dry sites. Shrubs include Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), and blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.). Some more elevated areas support sand-myrtle (*Leiophyllum buxifolium*). The rare bear oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*) is present on dry ledges at Crowders Mountain and Kings Pinnacle. Herbs that are typical of these communities include silverling (*Paronychia agyrocoma*), galax (*Galax urceolata*), mountain spleenwort (*Asplenium montanum*), and the rare Bradley's spleenwort (*Asplenium bradleyi*). Tangles of common greenbrier (*Smilax rotundifolia*) are frequent around the outcrop margins. Good examples of this community are also present from Sherrars Gap southward, but they are not known to support rare species. One such area on Blair Mountain southwest of Stepps Gap supports an outcrop community that is possibly an even rarer community type. It is distinctive in having a more gladelike structure, with shallow soil over bedrock, and denser herb cover. It supports shrubs such as sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*) and herbs such as northern oatgrass (*Danthonia spicata*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), flowering spurge (*Euphorbia corollata*), goat's-rue (*Tephrosia virginiana*), wild oregano (*Cunila origanoides*), woodland sunflower (*Helianthus divaricatus*), greater coreopsis (*Coreopsis major*), and others.

Pine--Oak/Heath communities, which are rare in the Piedmont, occur on thin soils adjoining the rocky summit areas at Crowders Mountain and Kings Pinnacle. They have semi-open canopies dominated by Virginia pine, chestnut oak (*Quercus montana*), other oaks (*Quercus* spp.), sourwood, and others. Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) and sourwood are occasional in the understory. Their fairly dense heath-dominated shrub layers include mountain laurel, black huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), horse-sugar (*Symplocos tinctoria*), and dryland blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*), as well as by the rare bear oak and sprouts of American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*). The rare Kings hairstreak (*Satyrrium kingi*) occurs in this habitat on Kings Pinnacle.

Piedmont Monadnock Forest communities of variable quality occur extensively through the site on lower to upper slopes and ridgetops. Some of the more mature examples occur on Kings Mountain and Kings Pinnacle. Substantial areas on Crowders Mountain were damaged by wildfire in decades past. Significant windthrow has occurred in some areas. These communities have a canopy